



Windows with a Story - “A Tale of an Epic Victorian Love ”

By Ted Latham

I Shall Not Be Afraid

*I shall not be afraid any more,
either by night or day,
What would it profit me to be afraid
with you away?*

*Now I am brave. In the dark night alone,
all through the house I go,
locking the doors and making windows fast
when sharp winds blow.*

*For there is only sorrow in my heart,
There is no room for fear.
But how I wish I were afraid again,
my dear, my dear!*

“I Shall Not Be Afraid,” is a poem penned in 1919 by a woman named Aline Kilmer. As a young girl, Aline moved with her recently widowed mother, Susan “Ada” Foster Murray, to Metuchen. It was a newsworthy event that was noted in the following article in the local “Metuchen Recorder” in 1900:

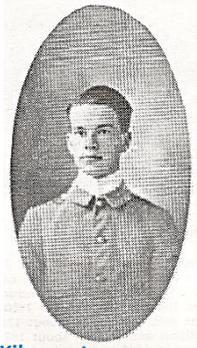
“New York Sun, Feb.21 – Mrs. Ada F. Murray of Norfolk will be married tomorrow morning in Washington DC to Mr. Henry M. Alden. The marriage will be private and will, it is understood, take place at the rectory of an Episcopal church there. The fact that the marriage would occur has been kept secret and only became known by accident today. The bride-elect is the widow of the late Kenton C. Murray, long editor of the Norfolk Landmark. Her son, K. Foster Murray, 21; Ada B., 16; Aline and Constance, two younger daughters and Douglass, a five year old boy. Mrs. Murray was born at Edgebrook, Va. Mr. Alden is editor of Harper’s Magazine, a place he has held for 31 years. He is almost 63 years old, a widower whose wife died about five years ago. He has three daughters.”

A few days later a follow-up story appeared:

“Sat., Feb. 24 – Mr. Alden and his bride arrived in Metuchen on the early train, Thursday evening, the marriage having taken place at Washington, in the morning. Mr. Alden is to be congratulated, and Metuchen society will give Mrs. Alden a cordial welcome.”

The deceased Kenton C. Murray was a close friend and publishing colleague of Henry Mills Alden, founding member of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, vestryman and occasional senior warden for over fifty years.

It was not uncommon in those years that a male friend of the family would marry the widow and take on the responsibilities of raising his family. Such was probably the case of the marriage between Mr. Alden and the widow of Kenton Murray. Very soon after arriving in Metuchen, all of Kenton's children were adopted by Mr. Alden who was known to be a very loving father to all in the combined family, "the Alden Bunch." Because the widow Murray was a Catholic provides a clue as to why she and Henry were married in the Rectory of the Episcopal Church in Washington, DC. Once in Metuchen, she became a very involved member of St. Luke's and entertained all of the famous guests that Henry Mills Alden brought to the "Brainy Boro" of Metuchen.



Joyce Kilmer at Rutgers Prep

Each of the children were treated to the best schools in the area, and young Aline attended the lower and upper grades of the Rutgers Preparatory School in New Brunswick, then located at the corner of Somerset Street and College Avenue, just across the street from Rutgers's "Old Queens." While at Rutgers Prep, Aline met and eventually fell in love with a young man from New Brunswick named Joyce Kilmer. Joyce came from a well-to-do family, and would eventually become an "appropriate" match for Aline's family.

Richard G. Durnin's short biography of Joyce Kilmer reports that after the family moved to 17 Codwise Avenue in New Brunswick, Joyce was born on December 16, 1886, to Annie and Dr. Frederick Kilmer. Dr. Kilmer made his fortune working as a chemist for the newly formed (1886) Johnson & Johnson. As head of the "Scientific Department" at J & J, he is credited with developing the famous J & J baby powder. Joyce, the fourth and last child, was baptized in his family's parish at Christ Episcopal Church in New Brunswick, by the Reverend Elisha Brook Joyce. The sponsors were Reverend Alfred R. Taylor and the future poets older brother Anda F. Kilmer (a curate in the church) and a Mrs. R. Blauvelt. Baby Kilmer's unusual first and middle names came from the Alfred and Joyce that baptized him.

It has been said that Joyce Kilmer was a young man of deep spiritual orientation. In 1904 at the age of 18 he became a lay reader at Christ Church while an undergraduate at Rutgers College. His mother wrote that he once had an interest in the ministry of the Episcopal Church and tended to think of himself as a "high churchman," with an interest in the ritualistic emphasis on the Eucharist more closely associated with the practice of Anglo-Catholic or Roman Catholic practices. In the beginning of his spiritual awakening he referred to himself as a "ritualistic Anglican," and he and his new wife converted to Catholicism in 1914.

High school sweethearts Joyce Kilmer and Aline Murray Alden married on Tuesday, June 9th, 1908 at the altar of St. Luke's Episcopal Church by the Rev. Dr. John F. Fenton. The entry for the marriage of Joyce and Aline in St. Luke's record of marriages is shown below.

| 202 | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|--|----------|--|
| Marriages. | | | | | |
| Day and Date. | Place. | No. | Names. | Age. | Residence. |
| Thursday Oct. 31 st 1907 | Metuchen St. James | | Walter Russell Cross Grace Cross Cook | 22 22 | Metuchen, N. J. Windsor New Brunswick |
| Tuesday June 9 th 1908 | St. Luke's Church | | Alfred Joyce Kilmer Aline Murray | 21 19 | New Brunswick, N. J. Metuchen, N. J. |

and on the adjacent page 203:

| Parents' Names and Residence. | | Signature of Clergyman. | Witnesses and Remarks. |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Joseph L. & Grace A. Moss David C. & Cynthia W. Cook | | John F. Fenton | Grace R. Moss |
| Fred. and Annie Kilmer Kenton C. and Ada B. Brunay - (Alden) | | John F. Fenton A. B. Joyce. (assist) | M. M. Alden Elizabeth B. Fenton |



Aline Murray Alden



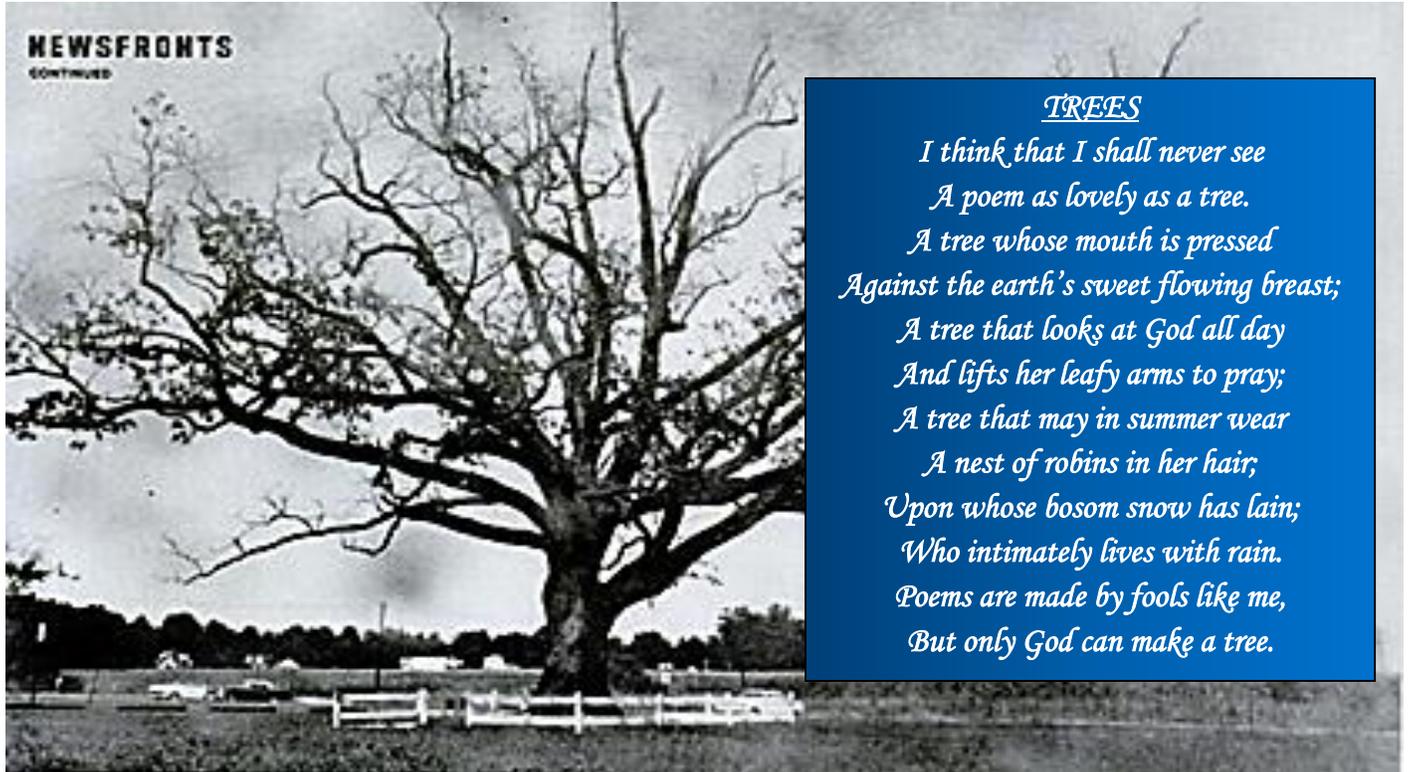
Alfred Joyce Kilmer

On July 18, 1993, Kenton Kilmer, son of Aline and Joyce Kilmer, visited St. Luke's on a nostalgic trip to the place where his parents were married. The visit coincided with the 75th anniversary of the publication of his father's poem, "Trees." Kenton and father Zelley had a nice conversation and Kenton was able to view his parent's marriage records as shown below

Aline and Joyce settled in Mahwah, NJ, and In order to support a growing family and his career as a writer and poet, Joyce Kilmer taught English and Latin at Morristown High School.

In 1909 he worked on the preparation of Funk and Wagnells' **Standard Dictionary** and eventually became editor of an Episcopal Church weekly, **The Churchman**, went on to work for the **NY Times**, and taught newspaper verse in the New York University Department of Journalism. Aline also had an interest in writing poetry and published seven volumes of her work later in life. During the Kilmers' life in Mahwah, Joyce Kilmer penned his beloved poem, "**Trees**," first published in 1913 and later set to music in 1922. Although no one knows if any particular tree inspired Joyce Kilmer to write this poem, a tree on the Rutgers School of Agriculture's property in New Brunswick became known as the traditional inspiration for the poem. The sprawling oak, 70 feet high and over three hundred years old is shown in the photo below in the year that it was cut down in 1963. Father Fenton was amused by the fact that Oak Avenue in front of the Church had no Oak trees anywhere in sight. To

correct this, he was responsible for planting the oak tree, that up until recently, thrived at the curb near our driveway. It was actually grown from an acorn dropped from the so called Kilmer Oak.



One of the last photographs taken of the “traditional” Kilmer Oak in New Brunswick was published in [Life Magazine](#) on August 30, 1963.

The poem, “Trees,” was dedicated by Joyce Kilmer to his wife’s mother. With some of the money that he raised from the publication of his famous poem, he purchased the stained glass window that so many of our parishioners love and refer to as the “Easter Lily Window.” Kilmer also dedicated this window to his mother-in-law, Susan Foster Alden.

Aline and Joyce had five children altogether; Kenton, Deborah, Christopher, and Michael. Joyce Kilmer’s last visit to New Brunswick was on September 10, 1917, for the burial of his fifth child. Five year old Rose Kilburn Kilmer had died after suffering with a childhood illness. Before he and Aline had a chance to recover from their grief, Joyce Kilmer left to serve his Country in the Great War in Europe later that same September. Aline and Joyce said good-bye for the last time on that day.



Sgt. Kilmer

Kilmer was promoted to Sergeant in March of 1918, He was killed in action on July 30th, 1918 in the Battle of Thierry in France, and buried in a military cemetery at Fereen-Tardenois. A posthumous Croix de Guerre was awarded to him by the French Government. Aline never married again, wrote of her sadness and recovery from grief, enjoyed being mother and grandmother to her children, and died on October 1, 1941.

*“They say that life is a highway and the milestones are the years,
And now and then there is a tollgate where you buy your way with tears.”*
Joyce Kilmer

For further information on Joyce and Aline Kilmer, check out the following webpages:

A sampling of poem by Aline Kilmer at

<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/books/kilmer/kilmer05.html>

A sampling of Joyce Kilmer's poetry at <http://www.poemhunter.com/joyce-kilmer/poems/>

Tour the Joyce Kilmer birthplace in New Brunswick. Info at

<http://www.hiddennj.com/2013/11/exploring-joyce-kilmer-house.html>

Rutgers graduate Paul Robeson sings "Trees" at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4SLrxEmJ6I>